

## Kerfuffle in the tree tops

While staying at Thurra River in Croajingolong National Park, my wife and I with two friends witnessed one of the best nature events of my 70 years. It occurred on 30th November 2013. My lady friend and I are both keen birders and we became interested in unusual calls coming from an acacia sapling of about 4 to 5 metres and quite close to our camping spot. When we investigated we were surprised to find that the calls were coming from several Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. They were making soft whimpering type noises that we had not heard before. My friend then observed a large snake (Fig. 1) about two metres up the tree. The snake was trying to reach out to a nest. At this stage, we were unsure of what species it was.

We watched as the snake tried to manoeuvre along a quite slender branch to the nest. The snake could not place much weight on the branch so it kept the bulk of its length attached to the trunk and gradually extended itself towards the nest, partially elevating itself as it stretched out. After about five minutes, it

managed to take a large chick from the nest and then spent a couple of minutes devouring it.

The snake then had to extricate itself from the tree. Its first attempts were to try and double back on itself to the trunk of the tree. It tried this for several minutes without success. It then extended itself as far as possible from the trunk and hung towards a lower branch. It swayed and searched again for several minutes until it simply dropped to the ground (Fig. 2), the branch below it breaking its fall sufficiently to prevent any injury. Now we were able to clearly identify the reptile as a Tiger Snake of between 1.5 and 2 metres in length. We shepherded the snake some metres from our camp where it curled up under some bushes for a well earned rest.

This whole event probably took in excess of 20 minutes and kept us and another nearby camper quite enthralled.

**Ken Harris**

59 Strickland Drive  
Wheelers Hill, Victoria. 3150  
Email: harriskv@optusnet.com.au



Fig. 1. Tiger Snake hunting in the tree tops.



Fig. 2. Tiger Snake after a successful hunt.

### Bird's nest in birdbath!

On 13 January 2014, while walking with my six-year-old grandson near the eastern end of Normanby Road in the Melbourne suburb of Notting Hill (Melway map 70 J10), we found a bird's nest on the footpath near a eucalypt. The nest was made of thin strips of bark and lined with a white, fluffy synthetic material. I put it in our 'collection bag of interesting items', brought it home, and later left it on the ground in our garden. The next day, when I went to refill one of our birdbaths, I was surprised to find the bird's nest soaking in it.

I took the nest out of the birdbath and put it back where I had left it the previous day. On 8 February 2014, I found what was left of the nest in the same birdbath, and this time took the opportunity to photograph it (Fig. 1).

Two Little Ravens visit this birdbath regularly, often bringing pieces of bread, and occasionally bones, which they soak in the water. They are the only creatures in this area that would be likely to transport the nest to the birdbath, and presumably did so because they thought the white synthetic material might be edible when soaked. The distance between the birdbath and the place where I had put the nest is 2.8 m, and the bath is 300 mm above the ground. The nest was very light in weight.

Soaking food in birdbaths is a common behaviour in corvids and has been reported frequently (e.g. Inglis 1991; McMillan 1992; Slee 1992; Reid and Reid 1996; Slee 1996; Mackenzie and Mackenzie 2008), but to date I have found no reference to corvids soaking a bird's nest.